# Part 4. Sharing the road



## **Pedestrians**

Children and older people are often victims of traffic accidents. Pedestrians represent the second largest category of motor vehicle deaths and injuries in New Jersey.

The U.S. Department of Transportation Fatality Analysis Reporting System in 1998 reported the nation had 1,929 alcohol-related pedestrian fatalities of 5,228 total pedestrian deaths. New Jersey had 154 pedestrian deaths in 1998; 42 were alcohol related. Unfortunately, many of the measures that make roads safer for drivers such as large medians and wide shoulders make those roads more treacherous for pedestrians. Car-pedestrian accidents have a 5 percent fatality rate if the car is going 20 mph, but the rate jumps to 85 percent at 40 mph.

Pedestrian activity is at its greatest in densely developed areas such as cities and town centers, but also significant in neighborhoods and along and across suburban roadways. Motorists should take special precautions to watch for pedestrians.

Drivers should watch for signs that mark special hazard areas such as school zones, bus stops, playgrounds, parks and schools, where children are most likely to play or cross the streets. Children chasing a ball, for instance, give no thought to traffic. Small children are hard to see. Always watch for movement around parked cars.

Motorists should drive cautiously along roadways with on-street parking as pedestrians may appear from between parked vehicles.



Drivers traveling at lower speeds will have the ability to stop the vehicle and avoid potential conflicts with pedestrians.

Pedestrians and joggers should always walk or jog off the roadway and face traffic. They should cross at crosswalks only on proper signal, look all ways before crossing, avoid crossing between parked cars and at night wear light-colored or reflective clothes, carry a white handkerchief or a light. It is not a good practice to wear headphones while walking or jogging near the roadway.

At night, drivers should watch for anyone walking along a highway and blow their horn to warn the person on foot.

Always yield to pedestrians. Be extra careful at intersections particularly when making a right turn on red when allowed. Motorists are required to yield to pedestrians who have the right of way within a crosswalk and are crossing at an intersection. Be alert for pedestrians when making turns or when entering and exiting driveways, parking lots and alleys.

# Visually challenged persons

The law is very specific that blind persons using a predominantly white or metallic walking cane, blind persons accompanied by a guide dog, or a guide dog instructor engaged in instructing a guide dog have the right of way over vehicles when crossing any highway or intersection. Stop when you see a person with a white or metallic colored cane, or with a guide dog. All motorists must comply with this law.

## Bicycles, skateboards and inline skates

New Jersey law states that bicyclists, skateboarders and inline skaters on a roadway have all the rights and are subject to all of the responsibilities of the motor vehicle driver. When you are following or passing a bicyclist, skateboarder or inline skater leave plenty of room. Any bike used after dark must have front and rear lights and a rear reflector. But these may be very hard to see. Watch the side of the road and be ready to dim your lights. As you approach a bicyclist, skateboarder or skater, beep your horn as a warning that you are approaching.

The International Inline Skating Association advises that inline skaters go with traffic and they are safer when treated like motor vehicles on the road. If you would normally yield to a motor vehicle, then you should yield to a bicycle, skateboard or skates as well. Be aware that bicycles, like any smaller vehicles, are harder to see. Watch for them and always drive defensively.

For example, to turn right motorists, bicyclists, skateboarders and skaters should stay as close to the right edge of the roadway, signal your intention to turn at least 100 feet before the intersection and stop before making the turn.

Always yield to through traffic. Motorists turning right should be aware of bicyclists, skateboarders and skaters and let them pass through the intersection, just as they yield to other traffic.

To turn left, a bicyclist, skateboarder or inline skater may also choose to turn as a vehicle does. The driver should be alert that if there is a left turn lane, the bicyclist, skateboarder or inline skater will ride on the right edge of the turn lane.

## **Motorcycles**

Motorcycles and motorized bicycles (MOPEDs) are subject to the same laws governing cars and other motor vehicles. However, extra care should be taken when sharing the road with them, since their size makes them harder to see than larger vehicles.

Be on the alert for the possibility of the presence of a motorcycle at intersections, coming around curves or driving in your blind spots. Do not follow motorcycles too closely. Also, be aware that such hazards as slippery surfaces, uneven surfaces, grooves, gratings and sloping surfaces present unique challenges to motorcycles and motorcyclists who often react to these situations in ways different from other motorists. A motorcyclist must deal with objects on the roadway different from an automobile driver. If a motorcyclist is swerving, s/he may be trying to avoid an object. For example, a motorcyclist has to drive across railroad tracks as close to a 90 degree angle as practicable to surmount any obstacle and to avoid a deflection of the front wheels. As always, be on the alert and drive defensively.

Include motorcycles in your visual search pattern. They are smaller than most vehicles and you may underestimate their speed. Failure of a motorist to detect and recognize motorcycles in traffic is the most common cause of motorcycle collisions. A vehicle making a left turn directly into the path of an oncoming motorcycle is the most common car and motorcycle crash. Drivers involved in collisions often report not seeing the motorcycle or seeing it too late to avoid a collision.

When a motorcyclist passes you, maintain your lane position and speed. Allow the motorcyclist room to complete the maneuver and assume proper lane position as quickly as possible.

## **MOPEDs**

Motorized bicycles or MOPEDs are low-speed, two-wheeled vehicles. They are intended for limited use on public roadways at a maximum 25 mph MOPED drivers must know the meaning of all traffic signs and signals and drive on the right side of the road with traffic. Be on the alert for them.

## **Snowmobiles**

In the winter, drivers in certain areas of New Jersey may encounter a snowmobile crossing on a public highway. Use care if you're driving in an area with a snowmobile sign posted.

## Slow moving vehicles

Certain slow-moving farm vehicles, construction equipment and vehicles drawn by animals may share our roadways. Use care as you approach and pass these vehicles. Be alert for the special emblem that the driver must place on the rear of the slow-moving vehicle, illustrated on p. 118 of this manual.

#### Vehicles and trains

Drivers must take extreme caution when approaching and crossing railroad tracks. Always heed the warning signs and signals that are posted 750 feet before the tracks, the pavement markings and the crossbuck signs posted at most tracks. These signs and signals are illustrated on p. 113 and p. 118 of this manual.

#### Horseback riders and drivers

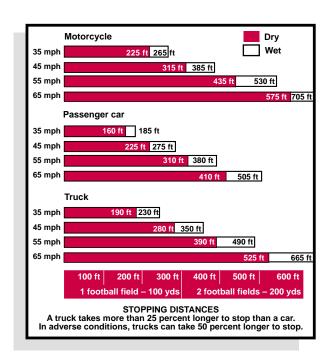
A rider of a horse or a horse-drawn vehicle has the same rights and duties of a motor vehicle driver when riding on a public highway. Approach a rider with caution; don't blow your horn; and maintain a maximum speed of 25 mph. Just as you stop for the driver of a motor vehicle who signals to stop, turn, or pass, you should observe a hand signal from a horseback rider or horse-drawn vehicle driver. Also, there are riding and parking rules a rider must follow.

For example, a rider may not use certain limited access highways; must ride with the traffic and keep as far to the right as possible; cannot drive or back a horse or horse-drawn vehicle across a sidewalk without the owner's or municipality's consent; cannot leave a horse unattended on a highway unless properly and sufficiently harnessed to a weighted vehicle; and must take necessary precaution when hitching and unhitching a horse from a vehicle.

Speeding and illumination rules also apply. The rider cannot race a horse on a highway. When traveling, you must display a light on a horse-drawn vehicle from thirty minutes after sunset to thirty minutes before sunrise, and in foggy weather.

#### **Animals**

Animals often dart onto the roads or streets. Trying to avoid them often causes accidents. By swerving a car, you may hit something else or be hit by a car from behind if you stop quickly. The best

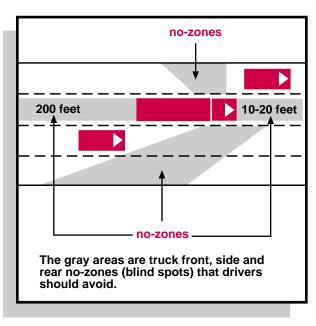


defense against such accidents is to watch for animals on both sides of the road ahead and be prepared for unexpected movement.

# Trucks, tractor-trailers and buses

In New Jersey certain sized interstate trucks must use the National Network, a system of highways specifically identified as appropriate for them or risk a fine, but they may travel on state or county roads when making deliveries, pickups or for general commercial business, to purchase fuel or food and for services. Drivers need to use caution when driving alongside trucks. New Jersey uses special National Network signs to identify the roads (see Part 7). Sharing the

road with large vehicles such as trucks, tractortrailers and buses can be safe if you know their maneuverability, stopping and visibility limitations, and respect their size. The best rule to follow is the no-zone principle: avoid the area around trucks where cars disappear into blind spots or are so close that they restrict the truck driver's ability to stop or maneuver safely. If you drive in the no-zone, you greatly increase the potential for a crash.



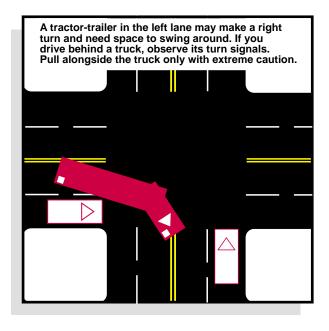
Here are some guidelines to follow.

#### Rear no-zones

- Stay far behind a truck that is preparing to back up or is backing up. Never pass close behind a truck that is preparing to back up or is in the process of backing up. Because of their width, the trailers completely hide objects that suddenly come between them and a loading area. The area behind the truck is a no-zone blind spot for you and the truck driver.
- Increase your following distance behind a truck or other large vehicle so its driver can spot you in the rear view mirrors. Never tailgate or remain

sandwiched between trucks. Maintain a sizable space cushion between you and larger vehicles.

• Leave space when you stop at a light or sign behind a truck or bus, especially when facing uphill. The larger vehicle may roll backward slightly when starting.



 Give more roadway to a truck driver who is making a wide turn. Because trucks are larger than cars, their drivers may have to slow, back up or swing wide to negotiate a turn. They cannot see smaller vehicles directly behind or beside them. For example, a truck driver may have to swing wide to the left to make a right turn.

#### Front no-zone

Maintain a consistent speed when passing. Do not pull in front of a truck
when passing until you can see the whole front of the truck in your rear
view mirror. Always signal before changing lanes. Never pass a truck on
the right.

#### Side no-zone

• Drive away from the long blind spots on the sides of trucks. If the driver must quickly change lanes or make an emergency maneuver, you'll be in the way. Don't linger alongside a truck when passing.

### Head-on no-zone

• Bear right when you see a large vehicle traveling toward you from the opposite direction. You'll reduce wind turbulence between you and the larger vehicle and possibly prevent a sideswipe.



Energy used for transportation purposes accounts for approximately one-third of all energy consumed in New Jersey. If you want to save energy and money, here are a few tips to follow when you operate and maintain your vehicle.

BUY SMART. Follow the recommendations outlined in your car owner manual when you purchase fuel. More crude oil is required to refine higher octane fuels, yet higher octane does not improve gas mileage. Be careful not to spill fuel when filling your gas tank. It wastes gas, pollutes the air as it evaporates and can damage your car's paint finish. Choose the lowest viscosity oil recommended by your car's manufacturer for the season the oil will be in the engine. Avoid over-filling the crankcase. Too much oil can increase friction in the engine. Change the oil as suggested in the owner's manual. When replacing tires, consider radials. They may cost more, but save fuel.

**KEEP MOVING.** Try to avoid idling. Your car gets zero miles per gallon when it sits still. Turn right on red where permitted and keep left when not turning to permit vehicles behind you to keep moving. Limit warmups to 30 seconds, then proceed at slow to moderate speeds. Listen to radio reports to avoid roadways with traffic jams. Try to maintain a steady speed in traffic. Carry exact change or use the E-ZPass electronic toll collection system. With E-ZPass you can pay your toll without stopping. Avoid waiting in long lines at drive-up windows.

**SHARE**. Whenever possible, ride with a friend or co-worker. Increasing the occupancy of your vehicle from one to two persons doubles its efficiency on a passenger/mile basis, reduces air pollution and relieves traffic congestion. When you're ridesharing, use the high occupancy (HOV) lanes where available to avoid traffic congestion and save fuel.

**STAY TUNED.** Keep your car in top condition. A tune-up can increase your car's gas mileage as much as 20 percent. Keep your wheels aligned and tires properly inflated. You can expect about a 2 percent reduction in fuel economy for each pound of pressure your tires are under inflated below the recommendation for your car.

**TRAVEL LIGHT.** For every 100 pounds of added weight in your vehicle, you'll reduce fuel efficiency by an average of one-half mile per gallon. Avoid packing luggage on your roof; it reduces your car's fuel economy by increasing drag. To avoid additional drag, rely on your car's ventilation system for fresh air when traveling. At higher speeds, an open vent system increases drag about 1 percent, compared to 5 percent when windows are open.